

### Advice to authors

We prefer to receive all responses electronically as e-mail or on a disk. Processing your letter will be delayed unless it arrives in an electronic form. Responses should be under 400 words and relate to articles published in the preceding three months. They should include <5 references, in the Vancouver style, including one to the *WJM* article to which they relate. We welcome illustrations. Please supply each author's current appointment and full address, and phone, fax or e-mail details for the corresponding author. We ask authors to declare any competing interest. Letters will be edited and may be shortened.

wjmsf@pacbell.net

practice and was coming down with three or four viral upper respiratory infections myself every year, the inevitable consequence of bad food, not enough sleep, and treating countless sneezing and sniffing patients. I was not enthusiastic about enduring these same symptoms during my short vacation in Switzerland.

"Why don't you try this?" my cousin said, holding up a small brown bottle with a plain typewriter label. "It is dog fat—rendered oil from a dog. The herbalist in the village recommends it for colds."

I pried off the cap, took a whiff, and poured a slight amount onto my fingers. It had a greasy feel and distinct odor of wet dog.

"I recommend you take it with some brandy—might make it a bit easier to go down," he added helpfully when he saw the look of distaste on my face.

"Does it work?" I asked.

**"It occurred to me that my cold was just about gone anyway."**

"Well," he admitted sheepishly, "I've never actually tried it. Take it. You can have the bottle." I looked at him skeptically. He quickly added, by way of explanation, "You know, I never get sick, so I don't really need it."

I studied the brown bottle. The label advised a teaspoon, preferably warm, three times a day between meals, and pleasantly suggested that the elixir might be combined with fresh lemon juice and honey. It occurred to me that my cold was just about gone anyway.

Trying the dog fat now wouldn't really be a fair trial, would it? Better to wait until the next cold. Yes, I would keep this bottle and right at the prodrome, I would take it according to the directions.

For the past six years the bottle has sat in my bathroom cabinet, right next to

the ibuprofen, the cologne, and the skin moisturizer.

Whenever I feel the first hint of a cold—a vague feverish discomfort, slightly burning face, or irritable sore throat—I look at that brown flask. Hundefett. It is still completely full, since my symptoms somehow vanish and I have never again come down with a cold.

Paul Gahlinger, MD, PhD, MPH  
88 K Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84103

### A Warm Welcome

Dear Drs Wilkes and Shuchman,

A warm welcome to the all-new *WJM*! We are excited about the changes to the journal. We feel that the new journal will offer our physicians practical clinical information of the highest quality. You and your editorial board worked hard on this relaunch, and your efforts are reflected in the many new sections, such as Best Practice and Culture and Medicine, intended to create an enjoyable, readable, and trustworthy journal. We also eagerly await eWJM, the user-friendly, web-based collection of articles, reviews, pictorial quizzes, and medical events occurring in the Western states and provinces.

Most importantly, we look forward to working with you to assure that health care practitioners receive the type of clinical information they need to continue improving patient care as we head into the new millennium. We hope these new ideas will both stimulate and remind them of the glories of practicing medicine even in this difficult environment.

We welcome *WJM* and wish you the very best!

Jack Lewin, MD  
EVP/CEO, California Medical Association

George P Bunch, MD  
President, New Mexico Medical Society

Robert K Seehusen  
Executive Director and CEO, Idaho Medical Association